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ON PAGE

MIAMI HERALD
14 February, 1985

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U.S. report blasts Chile on rights

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WASHINGTON — The Reagan administration released its annual human rights report Wednesday, criticizing Chile, Cuba and Nicaragua and hailing improvements in two Central American allies, El Salvador and Guatemala.

The assessments in the Caribbean Basin came as no surprise, but the harsh judgment bestowed on Chilean President Augusto Pinochet's government marked a sharp departure from previous reports that were much more restrained.

Overall, the report said, the Western Hemisphere registered the greatest improvement in human rights conditions of any world region last year.

Elliott Abrams, assistant secretary of state for human rights and humanitarian affairs, pointed out that several countries have gone from military dictatorship to democracy in recent years, and "zero countries have gone from democracy to dictatorship. That's a very impressive trend."

Abrams acknowledged, however, that "the greatest disappointment would be Chile, where it appears ... that the movement toward a return to democratic government has been stalled and the degree of political repression has grown during the year."

The 1,453-page 1984 edition of the State Department's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* took Chile sharply to task in a reflection of U.S. frustration with Pinochet's refusal to implement political reform.

Last week, the administration signaled displeasure by abstaining on the vote for a \$130 million Inter-American Development Bank loan for Chile. Despite this, Pinochet on Tuesday fired his Cabinet chief and finance minister, who both were seen as relative moderates.

The U.S. has been particularly critical of Pinochet's Nov. 6 decision to reinstate restrictions on constitutional rights despite international pressures to lift them as a gesture to the moderate opposition.

As a result of the restrictions, the report said, "the government conducted several mass sweeps of poorer neighborhoods involving the temporary detention of over 8,000 persons; sent 421 persons, mainly alleged petty criminals, to a remote detention camp without trial and internally exiled another 257 persons without charges or trial."

Criticism of Cuba echoed previous reports, denouncing President Fidel Castro for "continued abuses of basic human rights ... as well as the denial of fair public trial, the use of torture and other inhuman practices."

"Credible information" sent from Cuba last summer by an apparently clandestine Cuban Committee on Human Rights described the firing squad executions of 37 persons and death sentences for 131 others between October 1983 and May 1984, the report said.

The document also listed reports of torture, disappearances and arrests of dissidents. In one case, it said authorities arrested five youths between 16 and 18 years old and sentenced them to as much as five years in jail for writing "Viva Reagan" and "Viva U.S.A." on school walls.

In Nicaragua, the report said, the Marxist-led Sandinista government continued to "tighten control" over society and continued to support "terrorist" activity in other countries, notably El Salvador. The report commended the Sandinistas, however, for reducing illiteracy and enhancing medical care.

The document said there were continuing "credible reports" that Nicaraguan security forces tor-

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tured and killed Miskito Indians and confiscated or destroyed their food supplies and property.

It also cited information from the Nicaraguan Permanent Human Rights Commission that Sandinista forces killed at least six political foes in 1984.

By contrast, the report said "there has been substantial progress" in El Salvador since the election of President Jose Napoleon Duarte last year. It cited a sharp decline in the number of disappearances and right-wing death squad killings.

It said civilian deaths declined from 139 per month in 1983 to 46 per month in the last half of 1984.

The report said the Salvadoran armed forces continue to be accused of human rights violations, particularly civilian deaths caused by air strikes against guerrilla strongholds.

However, the document defended the air raids and said most of the accusations were exaggerated or baseless because they came from the guerrillas themselves or from sources sympathetic to the insurgents.

Abrams denied that the report minimized alleged atrocities attributed to CIA-organized rebels in Nicaragua while accusing El Salvador's leftist guerrillas with human rights violations.

"The human rights report states that the [Nicaraguan] government claims that the guerrillas killed 1,000 civilians in 1984 and tortured and summarily executed prisoners," Abrams said. "So we

do state the view of the government of Nicaragua, though you might expect that we do not necessarily agree with that view."

The report said conditions in Guatemala, where the administration wants to resume full-fledged military aid this year, have also improved as a result of the military government's move toward elections.

"Politically-related deaths," it added, "remained significantly below the 1981-82 levels although they continued to be a major problem."